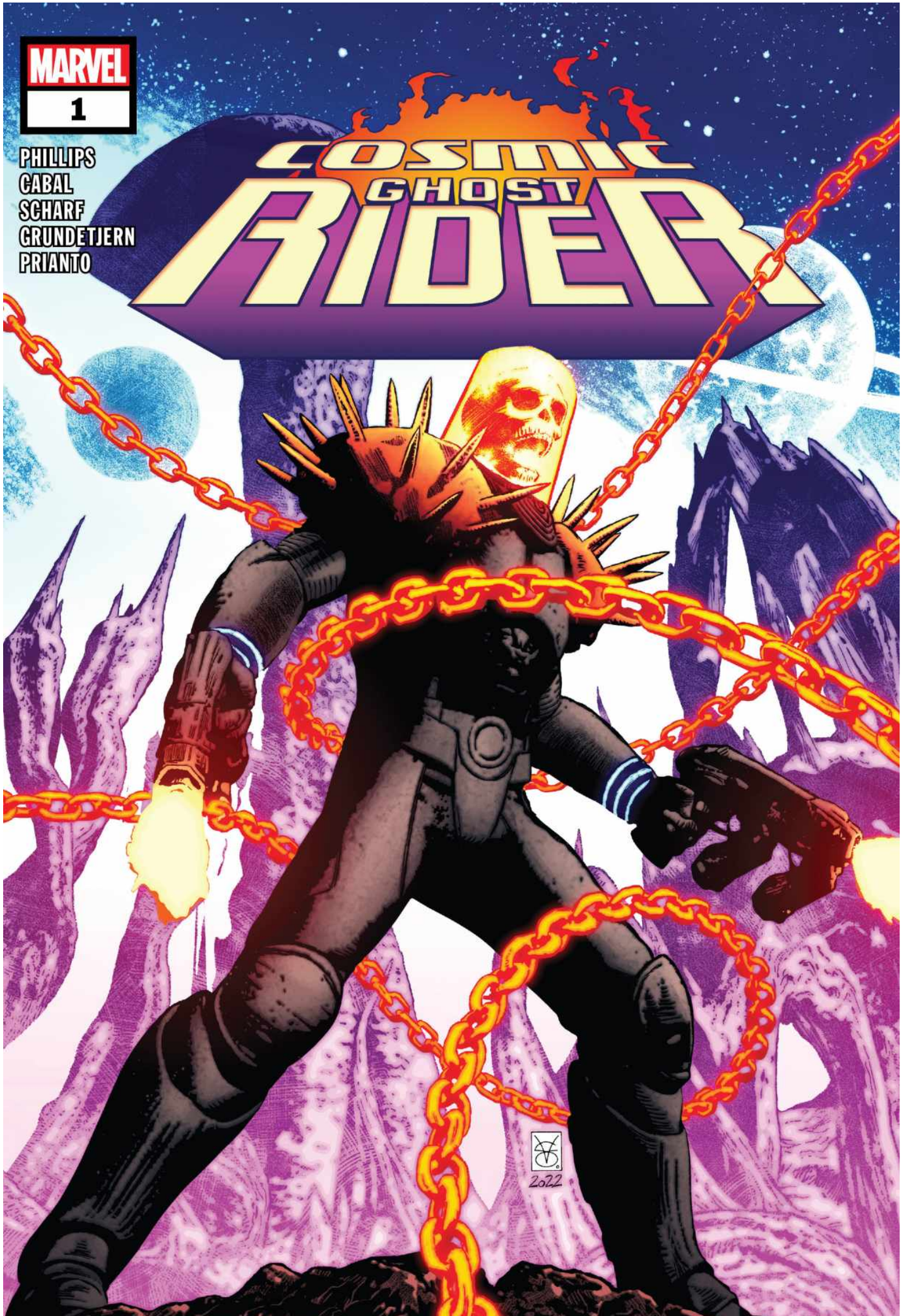
MARVEL
1
PHILLIPS
CABAL
SCHARF
GRUNDETJERN
PRIANTO
COSMIC GHOST RIDER
2022

FRANK CASTLE HAS BEEN TO HELL AND BACK! ONCE, HE WAS THE VIGILANTE KNOWN AS PUNISHER UNTIL HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION AS A SUPERNATURALLY EMPOWERED SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE. SINCE THEN, HE HAS SERVED AS A HERALD OF GALACTUS, THE RIGHT HAND OF THANOS AND A GUARDIAN OF THE GALAXY. AFTER LEAVING HIS MARK ACROSS ALL OF TIME AND SPACE, THE UNIVERSE HAS COME TO KNOW FRANK CASTLE AS...

COSMIC GHOST RIDER

"DUEL IDENTITY"

part one

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"COSMIC GHOST STORIES"

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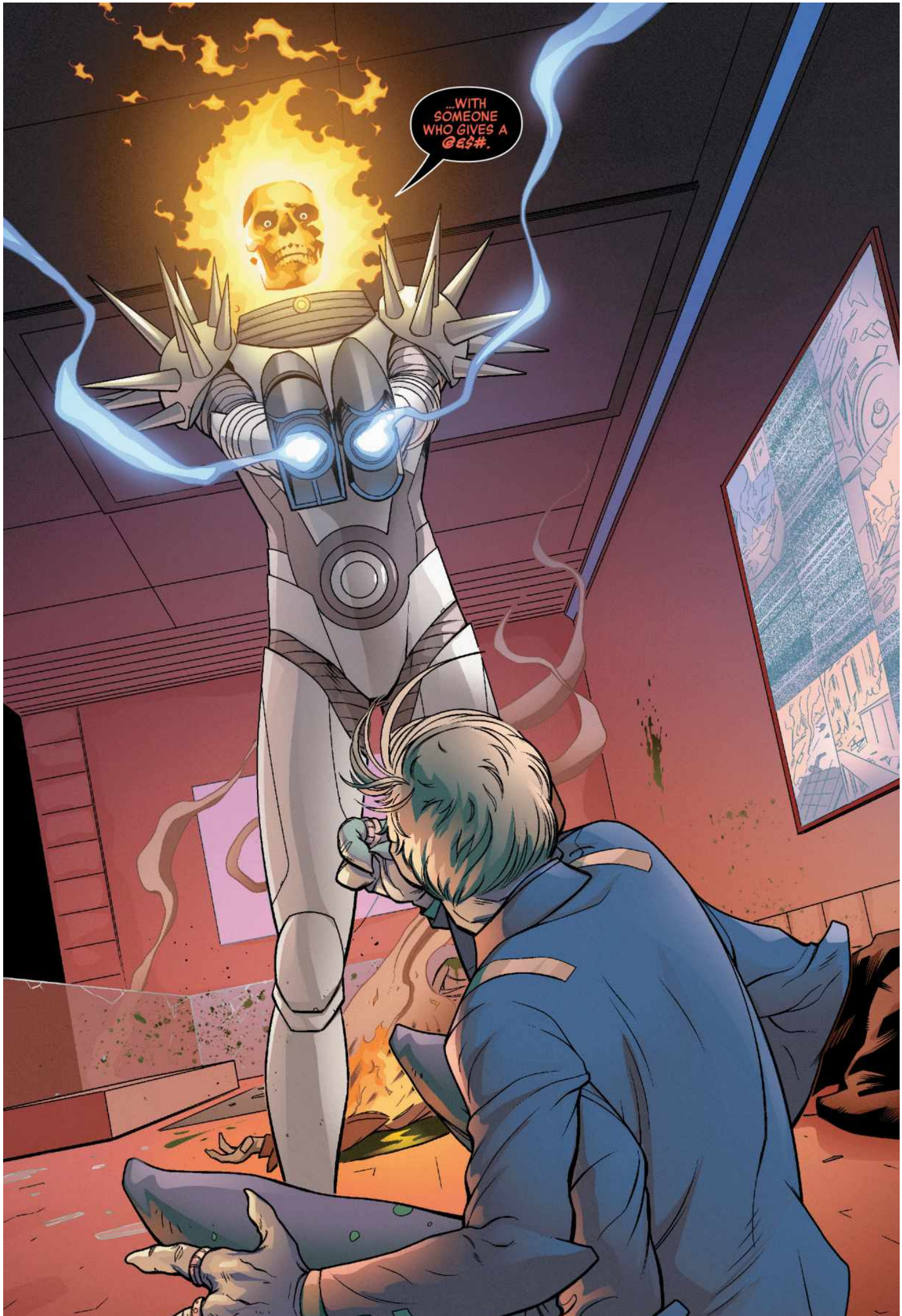
SPACE. DUH.
WAIT... WAIT! LET'S MAKE A DEAL...
...I...I'VE GOT MONEY... WHATEVER YOU WANT...
...J-JUST DON'T KILL ME...
PLEASE. I HAVE A FAMILY...A WIFE--
YOU SEEM TO HAVE ME CONFUSED...


...WITH SOMEONE WHO GIVES A @€$#.

BUT IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL ANY BETTER, AFTER I PAINT THE WALLS WITH YOUR BRAINS, OR WHATEVER THE HELL YOU'VE GOT IN THERE...
...I'LL PERSONALLY PAY A VISIT TO YOUR WIFE--
$%&@ YOU!
FWOOOSH
HASN'T ANYONE TOLD YOU IT'S RUDE TO INTERRUPT SOMEONE WHEN THEY'RE MAKING VAGUE YET OMINOUS THREATS ABOUT ANOTHER MAN'S WIFE?
NOW. WHERE WERE WE?
HRN!
OH, COME ON...

RUN...
...DON'T RUN...
...THE RESULT DOESN'T CHANGE...
...BUT HOW MUCH YOU PISS ME OFF DOES.
BLAM
UNGH!

WHY... UNGH...ARE YOU DOING THIS...?
SERIOUSLY? I'VE KILLED YOUR ENTIRE STAFF AND DESTROYED YOUR CASINO, BUT YOU'RE JUST NOW TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHY?
IF...IF YOU WANTED TO ROB THE PLACE, YOU WOULD--
TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN?
IF ONLY VENGEANCE WAS SO SIMPLE.
I'D SAY TO TELL YOUR FRIENDS COSMIC GHOST RIDER WAS HERE...
...BUT I GUESS THAT'S A MOOT POINT NOW.
BLAM!BLAM!

$@#&!
WUMP WUMP
FRANK!
YEAH, I'M COMING. I'LL JUST BE ANOTHER--
FRANK, THE PIPES STOPPED--
$%@&!
MARLOW'S

I SAID I WAS COMING!
THE DOOR WAS UNLOCKED...
DO YOU JUST OPEN ANY DOOR THAT ISN'T LOCKED?
I OPEN YOUR DOOR WHEN IT'S UNLOCKED AND YOU'RE LATE.
YOU SAID YOU'D BE DOWN AN HOUR AGO. AND THE PIPES--
I'LL FIX THEM. OKAY, AX?
I'VE TOLD YOU NOT TO CALL ME THAT.
RIGHT. SORRY. YOUR PROPER NAME IS AXELLE...
...QUEEN OF SECTOR NINE'S JUNK DISTRICT AND PURVEYOR OF ALL CRIMINALS, LOWLIFES, SCUM...

...AND OTHER SUCH VAGABONDS.
AND WHICH CATEGORY ARE *YOU* IN?
THE CATEGORY WHERE YOU NEED TO GET YOUR @#% TO WORK...
...YOU'RE LATE.
YOU KNOW THE *DEAL*. THAT ROOM'S NOT FREE.
I KNOW, MARLOW. WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN...

...I HEAR THERE ARE SOME PIPES THAT NEED TENDIN' TO.
AND THEN A NEW SHIPMENT OUT BACK TO UNLOAD WHEN YOU'RE DONE.
YESSIR. JUST CALL ME THE PIPE MAN... OR DON'T.
THAT SOUNDS TERRIBLE...
DON'T SAY IT, DAD...
I WASN'T GONNA SAY ANYTHING...
...BUT I WAS DEFINITELY THINKING ABOUT HOW WE HAVE NO IDEA WHO THE HELL THIS GUY REALLY IS. I BET FRANK ISN'T EVEN HIS REAL NAME.
I KNOW HOW YOU ARE WITH WOUNDED ANIMALS, AXELLE...

...JUST DON'T FORGET THAT MOST ANIMALS ARE AT THEIR MOST DANGEROUS WHEN THEY'RE BACKED INTO A CORNER.
HE HAS BEEN A HELP, AND YOU KNOW WE NEED IT.
EVER SINCE MOM--
I'M SORRY, DAD, I DIDN'T MEAN--
IT'S FINE. REALLY...
WE'RE FINE. AND WE DON'T NEED YOUR LITTLE PET TO BE FINE EITHER.
HE SAID HE'LL BE ON HIS WAY NEXT WEEK, AND I SAY GOOD RIDDANCE.
YOU AND ME?
WE ONLY NEED EACH OTHER, KIDDO...

"...IT'S US AGAINST EVERYTHING."
TWO NATURES ARE ALWAYS AT WAR!
GOOD AND EVIL... AT WAR WITH THEMSELVES...
...IN THEMSELVES...
...BY THEMSELVES!
HA!
BY THEMSELVES...
HUH?
GOOD...?
VRRRRMMMM
KRSCH
KRSCH

...OR EVIL...?
GOOD AND EVIL AIN'T THE ONLY CHOICES...

...SOME OF US ARE JUST DOING OUR DAMNED JOBS.
MARLOW'S?
TH-THERE...
MARLOW'S
APPRECIATED.

--HE COULD BE A KILLER...OR A THIEF.
HE HASN'T KILLED US OR STOLEN ANYTHING.
YET.
EXCUSE ME?
HE HASN'T KILLED YOU OR STOLEN ANYTHING YET.
I APOLOGIZE, BUT WE AREN'T OPEN. IF YOU'D LIKE TO COME BACK AT--
GOES BY FRANK, YES?
WHITE HAIR...DARK EYES...
SEEMS CHARMING, I'M SURE. BUT I CAN PROMISE YOU THAT THAT MAN'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK, DARLING.

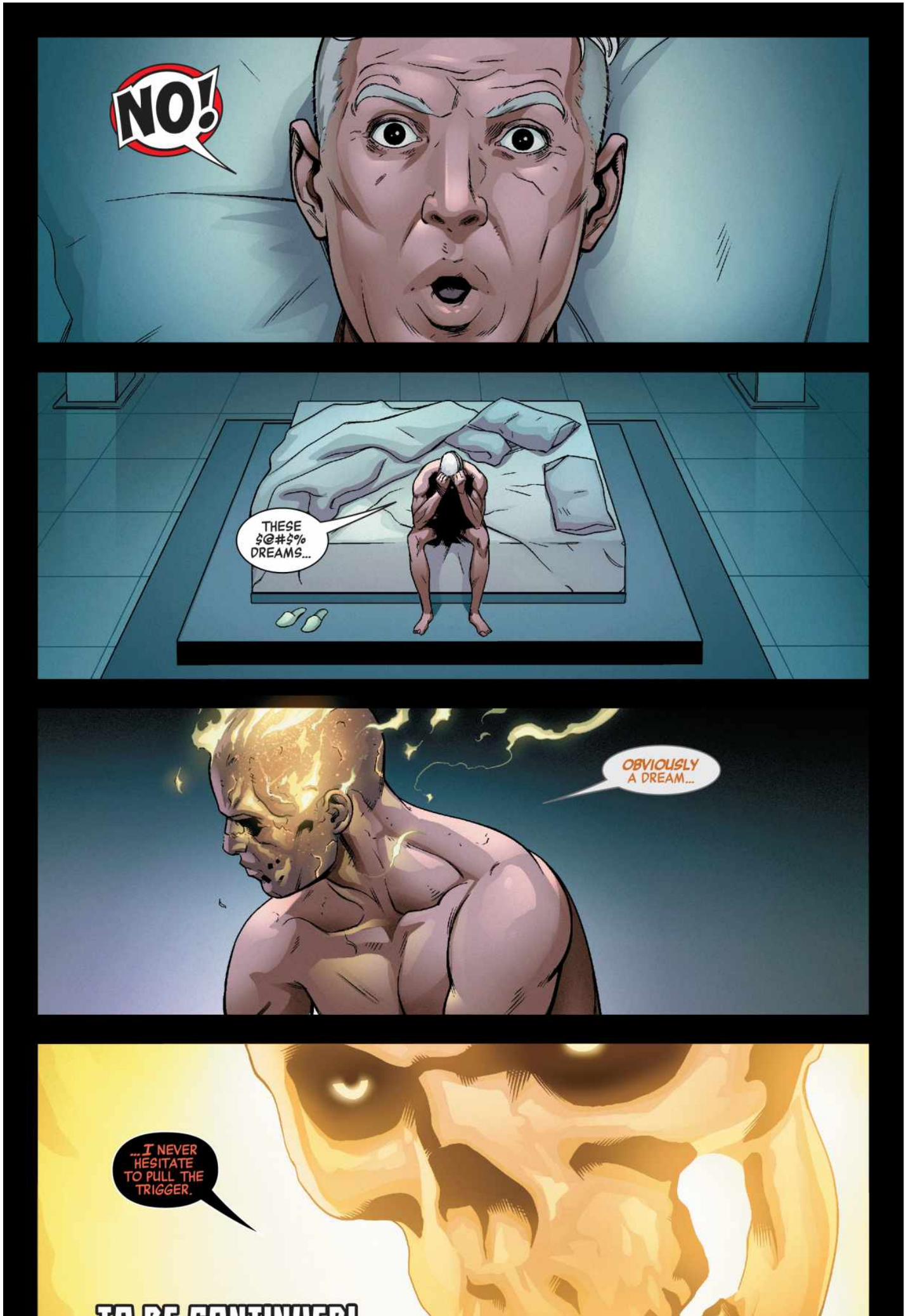
I TOLD YOU WE'RE CLO--
WHAM
HRN!
DAD!
THE MAN YOU'VE LET IN...HE'S A PROBLEM.
MARLOW'S
I'M KRAL DRAVITT...AND I'M HERE TO SOLVE THAT PROBLEM.
#@&% OFF.

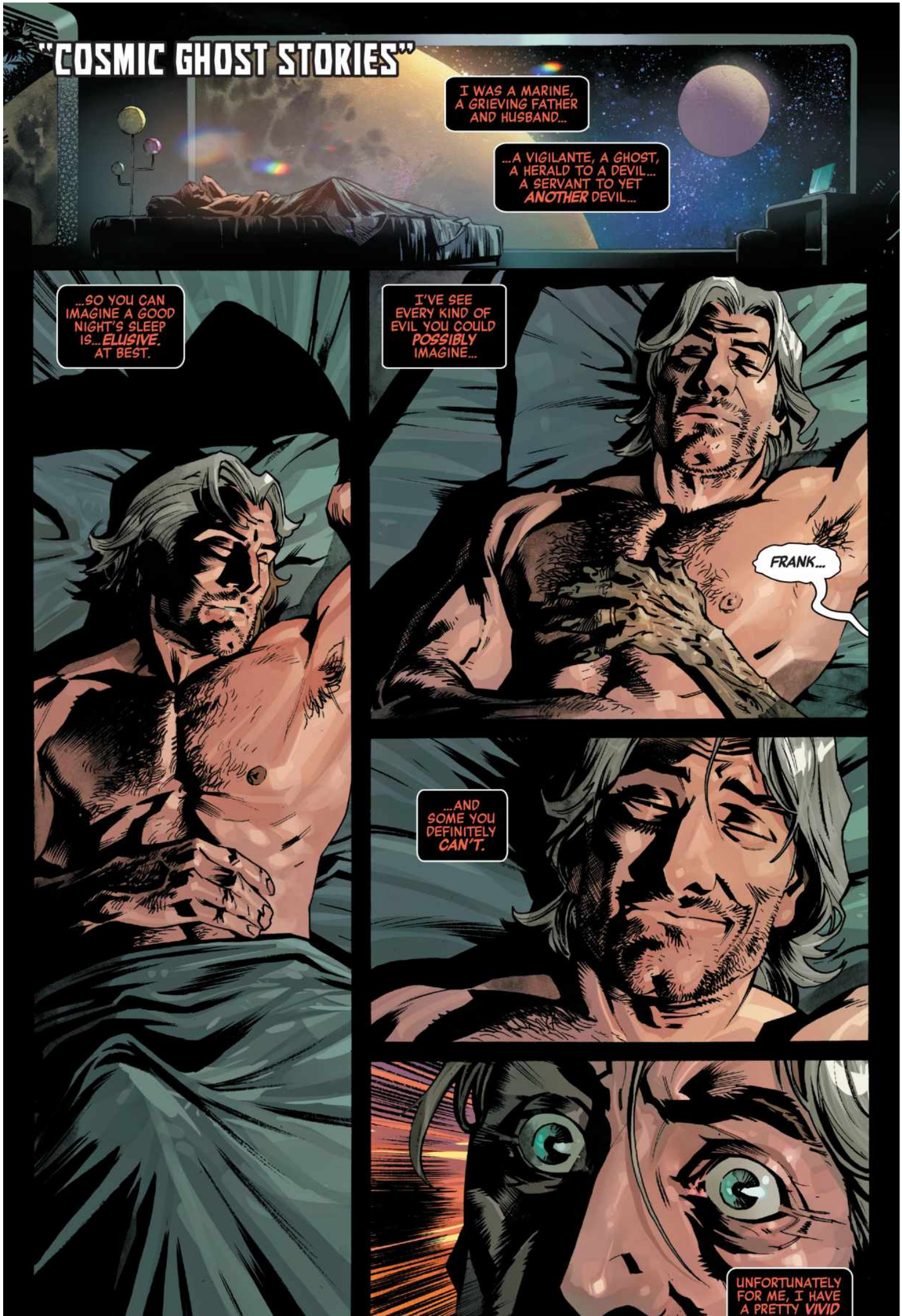
KRSSSH
HE SAID WE'RE CLOSED.
LET'S MAKE THIS REAL EASY...
...JUST TELL ME WHERE HE IS.
WE DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
SO NAIVE...
THE COSMIC GHOST RIDER BELONGS IN A GRAVE, NOT A BAR.
YOU'VE COME TO THE WRONG PLACE...

...COSMIC GHOST RIDER NO LONGER EXISTS.
THIS IS FOR THE SAKAARAN GUARD...

BLAM
WHY WOULD THE SAKAARANS WANT ME DEAD?
DON'T PLAY DUMB. IT'S INSULTING TO THEM AND YOU, RIDER.
THWAK
BLAM
YOU LITTLE...
AXELLE!
I TRIED TO MAKE THIS EASY...
LIKE I SAID...
...I'M NOT WHO YOU THINK I AM.

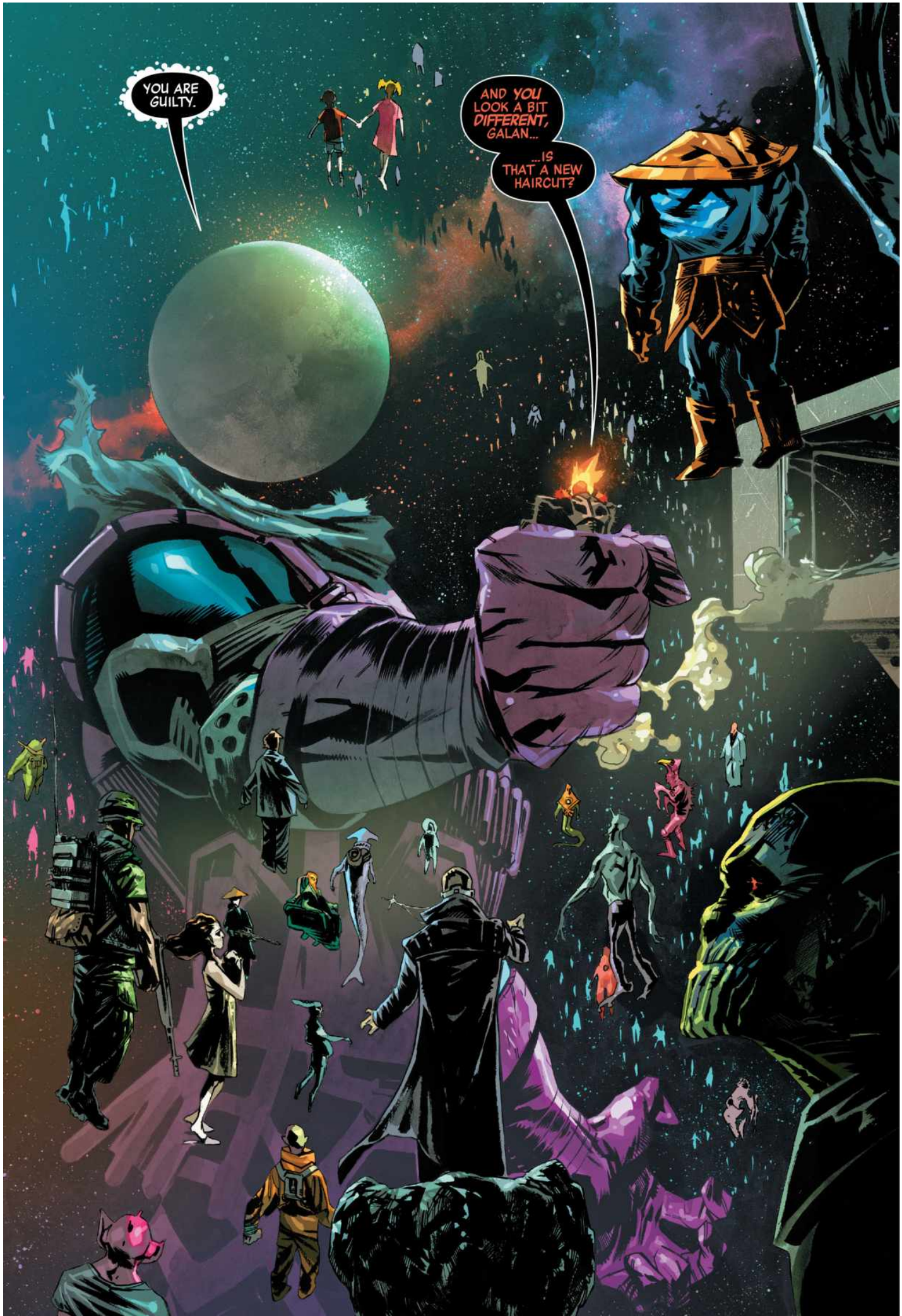
I SAW THE DESTRUCTION YOU CAUSED WITH MY OWN EYES.
WHATEVER THE ISSUE IS WITH THE SAKAARANS, YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG GUY.
DON'T MAKE ME, RIDER...
I...I DON'T WANT TO KILL YOU--
I DO! LET HER GO, YOU PIECE OF--!
BLAM
DAD!
NO!
NO...


NO!
THESE $@#$% DREAMS...
OBVIOUSLY A DREAM...
...I NEVER HESITATE TO PULL THE TRIGGER.
TO BE CONTINUED!


"COSMIC GHOST STORIES"
I WAS A MARINE, A GRIEVING FATHER AND HUSBAND...
...A VIGILANTE, A GHOST, A HERALD TO A DEVIL... A SERVANT TO YET ANOTHER DEVIL...
...SO YOU CAN IMAGINE A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP IS...ELUSIVE. AT BEST.
I'VE SEE EVERY KIND OF EVIL YOU COULD POSSIBLY IMAGINE...
FRANK...
...AND SOME YOU DEFINITELY CAN'T.
UNFORTUNATELY FOR ME, I HAVE A PRETTY VIVID

...THOUGH NOT THE "WAKING UP TO MY DEAD WIFE IN MY BED" KIND OF IMAGINATION.
MARIA?!
THAT'S NEW...
THIS CAN'T BE REAL...
COME ON, FRANKIE... THIS IS A DREAM, AND YOU'RE GONNA WAKE UP IN--
FRANNNNK...
FRANK CASTLE...
WHAM
WHAM
...WE KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE!
UNGH!

WELL, THAT SURE AS @#$% DIDN'T FEEL LIKE A DREAM.
HANK...BILLY "THE BUTTON" SUTTON... KIMBLE...
...I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU ALL IN... WELL, I GUESS IT DEPENDS ON HOW YOU PERCEIVE TIME.
AND, FRANKLY, I'M NOT CONVINCED YOU'VE GOT THE BRAINS FOR A CONVERSATION WHERE WE UNPACK THE SPACE-TIME CONTINUUM...
NOT THAT YOU DID BACK THEN EITHER--
HUH?
KRSSH


YOU ARE GUILTY.
AND YOU LOOK A BIT DIFFERENT, GALAN...
...IS THAT A NEW HAIRCUT?

AS MY HERALD, YOU HELPED SUSTAIN MY INSATIABLE HUNGER...
...DEVOURING THE WORLDS OF MANY OF THOSE BEFORE YOU TODAY.
JUDGING MORTALS FOR THEIR CRIMES. MAKING A DEAL WITH MEPHISTO.
FIGHTING BESIDE THE MAD TITAN.
DESTROYING TIME OUT OF A MISGUIDED SENSE OF MORALITY.
YOU FINALLY STAND ACCUSED FOR YOUR CRIMES, COSMIC GHOST RIDER.
NOT REALLY STANDING, AM I?
MORE LIKE HOVERING...BUT I SUPPOSE HOVERING ACCUSED FOR YOUR CRIMES DOESN'T CARRY THE SAME GRAVITAS.
I'M NOT ABOVE ACCOUNTABILITY, BIG GUY.
BUT I'D FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE WITH A BUNCHA ZOMBIES ATTACKING ME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT...
...IF I KNEW WHO I WAS REALLY TALKING TO.
FWSSSH

THE REAL GALACTUS WOULD NEVER LET ME CALL HIM GALAN.
SO LET'S FIND OUT WHO THE MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN CONTROLLING ALL THESE VERY JUDGMENTAL DEAD PEOPLE REALLY IS.
DADDY...?
...WHY DID YOU LET US DIE, DADDY?
FRANK JR.... LISA...I--I'M SORRY...
...BUT YOU'RE NOT REAL.
BLAM
BLAM
I'M ALL FOR A GOOD METAPHOR...

...BUT FORCING ME TO LITERALLY FACE MY GUILT?
I'D PREFER SOME GOOD OLD ELECTROSHOCK, PLEASE.
NO!
I AM NOT A VILLAIN.

BUT IT WOULDN'T BE FAIR TO CALL ME A HERO EITHER.
YOU'RE THE REASON... THEY'RE ALL GONE...
...MY FAMILY... MY ENTIRE PLANET...
...BECAUSE OF YOU.
I HAVE DONE EVERYTHING I'VE BEEN ACCUSED OF.
AND MORE.
I AM SORRY.
BUT THIS WON'T BRING THEM BACK...
...AND MAGIC ALWAYS HAS A COST.
YOU WILL ONLY LOSE YOURSELF.
I DON'T NEED A GEM THAT CAN CREATE SPECTERS FROM MY PAST TO REMIND ME OF ALL THE WRONGS I'VE DONE.
THOSE HAUNT ME EVERY DAY.

NEXT:

THERE ARE NOW TWO COSMIC GHOST RIDERS. ONE IS THE RECLUSIVE FRANK CASTLE, LIVING ON A REMOTE ALIEN PLANET. AND THE OTHER IS A RUTHLESS ASSASSIN CAUSING VIOLENT HAVOC ACROSS THE UNIVERSE! WHEN THE BOUNTY HUNTER MONARK STARSTALKER COMES LOOKING TO COLLECT FRANK FOR HIS COUNTERPART'S CRIMES, FRANK IS FORCED TO SUIT UP ONCE MORE--AND SOLVE THE MYSTERY OF HIS NEW DUAL EXISTENCE.

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ZONE